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Source: Journal of the House of Commons, reprinted by order of the House of Commons, 1803.

An Enclosure Act

January 26, 1769

A petition was read to the House of Commons from the chief proprietors of the land in Chipping Norton and Salford in the County of Oxford. Since there are several open and common fields which are of small advantage to the proprietors in these two parishes, the petitioners asked Parliament to consider a bill to enclose these lands, with each proprietor receiving a just share. The petitioners declared that enclosing and dividing the lands as explained in the petition will bring about considerable improvement to their respective estates.

It is ordered that members of Parliament from the County of Oxford should prepare a bill and present it to the house.

February 28, 1769

A petition representing several of the small landowners in the parish, was presented to the House of Commons. The petition sets forth that during the reign of Richard I (r.1157-1199), the Lord of the Manor of Chipping Norton granted to the tenants and landowners of his manor the right to certain common pasture grounds and common fields. The petitioners have heard that a bill is pending before the House to enclose and divide these common lands. They claim that some of these grounds furnish the poor of their community with fuel, a very sacred commodity. They also claim that the bill favors the large proprietors...the petition asks that they may be heard by the committee considering the bill.

Ordered. That the petition be referred to the committee and that the petitioners, through their legal counsel may be heard.

March 20, 1769

Lord Charles Spencer reported from the committee that was considering the bill to enclose and divide certain open and common fields in Chipping Norton and Salford. The committee has considered the petition A representing several of the small landowners in the parish and also heard the counsel of the original petitioners who wish to enclose the land. The committee found that the parties concerned by the enclosure (with the exception of a very small minority) had given their assent to the bill.

April 4, 1769

A bill for enclosing and dividing certain open and common fields in Chipping Norton and Salford in the county of Oxford was read.

Resolved: That the bill pass.

The Shaping of Western Society: An Inquiry Approach edited by Edwin Fenton (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, , 1974)

Document note: Medieval organization of British estates continued well into the 18th C. Practices such as granting tenants and small farmers strips of land allowing them to graze their cattle on common pastures prevented landlords from introducing new farming techniques, like crop rotation, that required large fields. In order to bring more land under their control, the landlords attempted to eliminate these practices upheld by medieval contracts, and enclosed, or fenced off, these lands for their own use. When tenants refused to give up their ancient rights, the landlord turned to Parliament for enclosure acts.